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Continuing reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 58/101 B of 9 December 2003, details the steps taken between March 2003 and February 2004 towards the continuing reorientation of the Department of Public Information. As a result of the implementation of the 2002 reform proposals of the Secretary-General (see A/57/387 and Corr.1), the Department now has a new mission statement, a new organizational structure and a new operating model. A new client-oriented focus, greater system-wide coordination and a culture of evaluation lie at the heart of the new strategic direction it has taken.

The Department has introduced the concept of the Secretariat departments as "clients", which identify their own priorities, and the Department of Public Information as "service provider", working along clear guidelines given by its clients. Formal arrangements have been established with 24 clients. The Department has also redoubled its efforts to bring the members of the United Nations system, including the network of United Nations information centres, within a common communications framework. The third element, a culture of evaluation, is now an integral part of the work of the Department. As an initial step in the three-year project between the Department and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the first annual programme impact review was completed in January 2004. This reorientation report, which incorporates the initial set of data collected as part of the review process, presents the preliminary efforts by each of the Department's divisions to assess results.

The report concludes that, as a result of its continuing process of reorientation, the Department has been able to enhance public information and bring the United Nations "closer to the people". The Department will continue to evaluate its performance and adapt its work programme to fulfil the substantive purposes of the Organization.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 12 of its resolution 58/101 B of 9 December 2003, the General Assembly welcomed the steps taken towards restructuring the Department of Public Information and encouraged the Secretary-General to continue the reorientation exercise and efforts to improve the efficiency and productivity of the Department, including wide-ranging and innovative proposals, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session.

2. In paragraph 14 of resolution 58/101 B, the General Assembly welcomed the Department's decision to implement an annual programme impact review, making self-evaluation a part of the daily work of all programme managers with a view to institutionalizing performance management. In paragraph 34 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session on the progress made. With the assistance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department has completed the first annual programme impact review. At a meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on Information held on 20 January 2004, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information informed the members that the findings of the review would be reflected throughout the reorientation report of the Department and submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session. Accordingly, this reorientation report, which incorporates the first set of data collected as part of the review process, presents the initial efforts to assess results.

3. It should be noted that, in several other paragraphs of resolution 58/101 B, the General Assembly called upon the Department to provide specific information on a number of its activities to the Committee on Information. They include:

- The activities of the United Nations Communications Group (para. 22)
- A progress report on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (para. 40)
- The progress made on consolidation of the United Nations field presence in a single United Nations house (para. 43)
- The role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping (para. 52)
- Measures taken to ensure accessibility to the United Nations web site by persons with disabilities, including visual and hearing disabilities (para. 62)
- The most practical, efficient and cost-effective means of implementing the Secretary-General's proposal on the continued development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in the six official languages (para. 66) and the designation of a date by which all supporting arrangements would be in place for the implementation of the Secretary-General's concept (para. 67)
- The proposal of the Secretary-General to provide free, public access to the Official Document System of the United Nations through a link with the Organization's web site (para. 71)
- The work of the Steering Committee on the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries (para. 78).

4. Through consultations with the Bureau of the Committee on Information, it was decided that the information requested in resolution 58/101 B, as well as in resolutions 58/126 of 19 December 2003 and 58/270 of 23 December 2003, would be grouped into six reports, the most comprehensive of which would be the one dealing with the continuing reorientation of the Department of Public Information. The remaining reports, listed in the provisional agenda and annotations/programme of work (A/AC.198/2004/1) address requests for information on more specific areas.

II. Reforming the Department of Public Information: defining a new focus

5. With the implementation of the September 2002 reform proposals of the Secretary-General, reflected in the report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1), a broad-based restructuring of the Department of Public Information has been completed. The Department now has a new mission statement, a new operating model and a new organizational structure, the details of which were provided in the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2003/2). In continuing the reorientation process, the focus of the Department of Public Information has been defined by its new mission statement which reads:

> "The Department of Public Information's mission is to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact."

At the heart of this new strategic approach lie three points of reference: a new client-oriented approach; greater system-wide coordination; and embedding a culture of evaluation into the work of the Department.

A. Client consultations

6. A new element in the operating model of the Department of Public Information is the introduction of the concept of the Secretariat departments as "clients", which identify their own priorities, and the Department of Public Information as "service provider", working along clear guidelines provided by the departments. The client consultation process is led by the newly created Strategic Communications Division, which is tasked with identifying the substantive activities and concerns of the Organization and preparing global strategies to promote them.

7. Great strides have been made in bringing the client planning process from a concept to a reality. Since November 2002, when the "client-oriented" focus was introduced, the Department has identified 24 clients and established formal working arrangements with them. During the past year, more than 30 strategies were prepared, either in writing or verbally agreed upon with the client departments. Eighteen written reports on the effectiveness of these communications strategies have been sent to the client departments and their feedback has been sought.

8. To facilitate the client planning process, each client department was assigned to one of the four sections within the Communications Campaign Service of the

Strategic Communications Division. Within each section, an individual was assigned as thematic focal point for each communication priority. For those client offices located in Geneva or Vienna, the relevant United Nations Information Service acted as focal point. Between January and March 2003, more than 40 working-level meetings were held. From March 2003 to October 2003, a total of 19 high-level meetings were held between the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and the Under-Secretary-General of each client office. A written brief was later developed reflecting the agreements reached on the overall priorities of each client department.

9. The Department has begun to report to clients on the results of implementing a communications strategy, including through compilations of media coverage generated. The Department has recently circulated a survey to ascertain the level of satisfaction of partner departments. While it is still early to reach a definitive conclusion, it is clear that the planning process provides a good tool which the Department of Public Information can use to further dialogue and exchange information with substantive departments and to increase understanding of the effectiveness of activities undertaken in support of their work.

B. System-wide coordination

10. In addition to the client-consultation process, the Department of Public Information has strengthened its efforts to bring the members of the United Nations system within a common communications framework. The United Nations Communications Group, led by the Department of Public Information, is key to this objective. Created in January 2002 at the initiative of the Department of Public Information, the Group has emerged as a strong communications platform by providing, inter alia, general policy advice on public information matters of common interest. On average, 30 members attend the regular meetings of the Group. Participation in the annual meeting of the Group has increased by 20 per cent, from 27 member organizations at the first such meeting, held in June 2002, to 33 in June 2003. A summary of the Group's activities over the past 12 months is provided in the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group in 2003 (A/AC.198/2004/5).

11. As implied by the term, system-wide coordination extends well beyond the offices located at United Nations Headquarters. The heads of United Nations information centres have become full-fledged members of the United Nations country team in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. They now chair or co-chair close to 80 per cent of the theme groups on public information and communications in the field, a development spurred by the increasing emphasis on advocacy by the United Nations Development Group. The cooperation with the country team has been further strengthened with the implementation of the recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services recommendation that all field offices should produce annual work plans which outline, among other things, activities that will be undertaken in cooperation with or in support of the country team.[1] The work plans, which incorporate the client department information strategies, are meant to give the field offices strategic guidance on key United Nations priorities and help them focus their outreach efforts. In the course of the year, these strategies were complemented by 38 strategic

guidelines to aid with their implementation. In 2003, 84 per cent of United Nations information centres submitted new work plans.

12. As a result, the field offices have focused more closely on the Organization's key priorities. For example, from 1 January to 31 October 2003, the total number of media events organized to promote the Millennium Development Goals by United Nations information centres was 568, an average of seven events per information centre. These efforts have also resulted in a change of focus, with the field offices devoting more attention to media and educational outreach and less to public and special events. Compared with the previous biennium, 2002-2003 saw an increase of 8.5 per cent in educational activities, for example, while there was a decrease of 9.5 per cent in general outreach activities over the same period.

13. An important element in the continuing reorientation of the Department of Public Information is the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, starting with the creation of a Western European hub. The proposal for rationalization, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on reform (A/57/387), was noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002 and reaffirmed the following year in resolution 58/101 B. Following consultations with the Member States of the United Nations that are members of the European Union, the Department of Public Information implemented the first step of the Secretary-General's proposal by closing the nine United Nations information centres in Western Europe on 31 December 2003 and simultaneously establishing a new Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels, which began operations on 1 January 2004. The establishment of the Brussels centre is a first step towards applying a similar approach to other regions over the next two years, with a view to making more efficient and cost-effective use of the resources available to strengthen the Organization's communications work in the field. Information on further regionalization is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2004/3).

C. A culture of evaluation

14. In response to the requests by the General Assembly in its resolutions 57/300 and 58/101 B, and with support from the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department has developed an annual programme impact review to systematically evaluate its products and activities. As reflected throughout the present report, the continuing promotion and refinement of a culture of evaluation and performance management is now an integral part of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information. In order to institutionalize this culture, the Department has successfully provided training to its staff to ensure the necessary analytical expertise for valid and reliable data collection on programmed activities. As a result, 90 per cent of all programme managers of the Department at Headquarters have participated in one or more training sessions. As an initial step in the three-year project between the Department of Public Information and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the first annual programme impact review was successfully completed in January 2004.

15. The impact review employs a results-based framework similar to that of the programme budget, incorporating self-evaluation in the daily work of programme

managers. The initial steps of the review have consisted of establishing baseline data in order to track future performance. In the first implementation phase, from February to July 2003, through a series of facilitated discussions, programme managers identified and validated departmental and divisional goals based on the Department's mission statement. In the second phase, from September to November 2003, workshops were held with staff at all levels in order to draft performance indicators for the review. While the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 prepared in 2002 includes 12 indicators, by the end of 2003, the Department had formulated 170 performance indicators to enable programme managers to comprehensively assess all their activities, as requested by the General Assembly. By the January session of the annual programme impact review, programme managers had collected baseline data on two thirds of these indicators. The Department's efforts in establishing baseline data is exemplified by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which conducted a survey among its users to assess their awareness of and satisfaction with library services. Based on the survey results, the Library has increased its outreach efforts and will be periodically assessing the impact of this campaign against the targets it has set. Other services of the Department are also using the same tools. Some of their indicators aim to gauge performance through the level of exposure to messages, for example, the placement rate of op-ed articles by senior United Nations officials in local and national newspapers, or the number of listeners of United Nations Radio programmes reached by partner stations in each region. Over 30 performance indicators are designed to help link the Department's products and activities more precisely to the needs of target audiences through user feedback. Evaluation results will also be used by programme managers to direct the reallocation of resources based on programme performance. For example, data collected on the results of United Nations information centres' activities will be used in the decision-making process for their rationalization.

16. Since the evaluation of programme impact requires resources not currently available, the Department has developed a cooperative framework with international professional organizations in the communications field. These partnerships will enable the Department to access feedback from target audiences beyond its internal capacities, producing rigorous evaluations of the impact of its work. In recognition of the Department's efforts, the United Nations Foundation, a private foundation based in the United States of America, has established an award for the best research on the effectiveness and impact of United Nations public information and communications activities.

III. New communications challenges

17. Over the past year, the war in Iraq and the subsequent developments, including the attack against the United Nations office in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, remained at the centre of international attention. For the Department of Public Information, it posed twin challenges. On the one hand, it had to explain the role of the United Nations in post-war Iraq and its future direction; and, on the other, to convince the world at large that there were other critical areas that needed equal, if not more, attention.

A. The crisis in Iraq

18. Virtually all parts of the Department were involved in ensuring full and timely coverage of the many issues and activities relating to Iraq with which the Organization was concerned. The issue had a deep impact, much of it adverse, on the image of the Organization around the world. The primary thrust, therefore, of the Department's efforts was concentrated on the development and dissemination of a coherent, coordinated and timely United Nations system response to the issue as it evolved.

19. To this end, an Inter-Agency Task Force on Iraq was convened and chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. This group, which brought together the relevant political, humanitarian, legal and other substantive offices, met regularly throughout the first part of 2003 to forge a common public information strategy on Iraq. The Task Force approved the establishment of a press briefing capacity in Amman in the event of military action, which was set up and staffed through the coordinated efforts of a number of departments, funds, programmes and agencies, including the Department of Public Information. During its period of operation in March, daily press briefings on United Nations activities were provided by an inter-agency team, moderated by a staff member of the Department, to the large number of national, regional and international media gathered in Amman. This was supplemented by regular interviews for specific media, as requested. The high level of attendance and feedback from media representatives confirmed the utility of this United Nations information capacity in the region. Live audio from the Amman centre was sent to Geneva and New York, and used for daily United Nations Radio programming, which was extended to seven days a week during this period, with uploading onto the specially prepared Iraq news focus page on the United Nations News Centre, where one-stop access to all the latest information on Iraq throughout the United Nations system was provided.

20. An essential element in the coordinated communications strategy on Iraq was the development of regular guidance for senior officials and other senior staff, in particular, the directors of United Nations information centres and offices, whose duties include speaking to the media. The Department was responsible for drafting this guidance, clearing it through all relevant offices and disseminating it in a timely manner. This was supplemented by regular reviews — sometimes three times a week — of press reporting and commentary on Iraq. The guidance to senior officials was supplemented by coordinated efforts to make United Nations officials available to the media on key occasions. These information efforts were vital in protecting the Organization's image and concerns.

B. Strategic priorities

21. While the crisis in Iraq and the political and security developments surrounding it remain at the centre of media attention, the Department of Public Information, using every means at its disposal, continues to promote global awareness and greater understanding of the work of the United Nations in priority areas. Its efforts are guided by the priorities laid down by the General Assembly and those established by the Secretary-General at the beginning of his second term. The Department, which is also guided by resolution 58/101 B which, in paragraph 8

refers to the United Nations Millennium Declaration[2] and paragraph 9 of the Millennium Development Goals, has been paying particular attention to such major issues as the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and the needs of the African continent. The Department, in cooperation with the relevant substantive departments and offices of the United Nations system, has begun to devise and implement communications strategies to promote the work of the United Nations in those areas.

IV. Communications campaigns: speaking with one voice

22. The Department of Public Information, in close coordination with partners and client departments, continues to raise public awareness and to help shape public debate on the goals and priorities of the Organization through targeted outreach to media and other key actors. With the Strategic Communications Division in the lead, the Department has carried out issue-specific communications campaigns and promoted international conferences at which these issues are considered. A recent example of a successful communications campaign carried out by the Department relates to the World Summit on the Information Society, the first phase of which was held in Geneva, from 10 to 12 December 2003.

23. The Department, in partnership with the International Telecommunication Union, developed a strategy aimed at positioning the Summit as a multi-stakeholder meeting, broadening the agenda from a narrow discussion of technology to include a range of crucial issues, including freedom of expression and opinion and its corollary, press freedom. As a parallel event, the Department of Public Information, together with the European Broadcasting Union and the Government of Switzerland, organized the World Electronic Media Forum, which drew 621 participants representing 374 organizations from 112 countries, among them top leaders of broadcasting organizations, and provided the Department with a major platform to further develop its worldwide media partnerships. For the first time in media history, the heads of the World Broadcasting Unions adopted a common platform, the Broadcasters' Declaration, affirming the role of the broadcast media in the information society.

24. Another successful campaign related to combating HIV/AIDS. The Department, in cooperation with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), undertook a "media blitz" in the two weeks leading up to World AIDS Day, 1 December 2003. United Nations senior officials were asked to undertake proactive media activities within their own area of responsibility to emphasize the cross-cutting nature of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Three opinion articles, each signed by a senior United Nations official, were placed in selected newspapers in China, India and the Russian Federation, all of which considered critical zones for HIV/AIDS. In addition, an opinion article on women, violence and AIDS was published in connection with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which was celebrated one week before World AIDS Day. Thirty United Nations information centres reported on special activities, which generated an average of 31 newspaper clippings per country, as well as many national radio and television stories. A radio interview with the Secretary-General broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was picked up around the world. In Bangladesh alone, the interview was covered by five different national newspapers.

25. The Department of Public Information's media work and communications strategy in the field of social and economic development resulted in thorough coverage by major international media outlets. Stories appeared in the *Financial Times*, *Der Spiegel*, Inter Press Service, Agence France-Presse and the BBC on the Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in August 2003. The Department organized the first three-city launch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs *World Economic and Social Survey* on 23 June 2003 in New York, Geneva and Santiago, yielding strong stories in the *Financial Times*, *Le Monde*, *The Boston Globe*, and others. In addition, the Department continued its work to raise the profile of the Economic and Social Council. More than 30 stories were filed in European newspapers and global wire services on the Council's high-level segment. In observance of the International Year of Freshwater, the Department promoted the launch of the first edition of the *World Water Development Report* on 22 March and of the World Water Forum, from 22 to 25 March 2003 in Kyoto, Japan. An inter-agency op-ed article for World Water Day, signed by six heads of United Nations agencies and programmes, was placed by the United Nations information centres and services in Austria, Bangladesh, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy and Portugal. Media work for the High-level Political Signing Conference for the United Nations Convention against Corruption, held in Mérida, Mexico, in December 2003, included innovative press conferences involving leaders from the civil society sector in the fight against corruption. As a result, some 200 stories were filed in national newspapers, on CNN and BBC and in the international wire services.

26. The needs of the African continent continue to be addressed by the Department as a priority issue. The *Africa Recovery* magazine, which serves as the backbone of the Department's communications strategy on Africa, is now an internationally recognized source for information and analysis, in particular with regard to the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The magazine's printed version reaches some 33,000 readers, including 3,100 journalists, 2,700 non-governmental organization activists, 3,800 academics and 2,800 government or intergovernmental personnel. The online version, available on the United Nations web site (www.africarecovery.org), saw a 21 per cent increase in visitors between January and October 2003. Early results from a survey of readers of the printed version, done at the end of 2003, indicate that approximately 88 per cent of the information published on Africa is not readily available elsewhere.

27. The Department has also made concerted efforts to reach out to the public and to the media in the Arab world. An innovation of particular importance has been the designation in the Department of a focal point for Arab media. Relevant press materials have been translated into Arabic and distributed by the focal point in a timely manner to some 300 media outlets in the Middle East and beyond and to the network of United Nations information centres in the region. In forging links with the Arab media, special emphasis has been placed on direct contacts via telephone and e-mail to provide information on questions relating to the United Nations and the Middle East. The Department has also continued its work within the framework of its special information programme on the Question of Palestine. In October 2003, the Department organized an international media seminar in Seville, Spain, with the theme "Towards a two-State solution". The seminar provided a forum for over 150 media representatives and international experts to discuss, among other things, the role of the media in the conflict, and the role of culture, literature and education in

facilitating a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, and the role of civil society in achieving peace. The twelfth seminar in this series is scheduled to take place in Beijing in June 2004.

United Nations peacekeeping and public information

28. The Department's support for peacekeeping has focused on helping to lay the ground for effective deployment of public information components in new missions, including the development of their communications strategies and alignment of their work with strategic goals. In this regard, the Department fielded staff for three integrated assessment missions to help to formulate recommendations for new or expanding peacekeeping operations, and supported a fourth. The Department loaned one staff member to the United Nations Mission in Liberia to design the Mission's public information component and to help launch its information strategy. In December 2003, the Department brought together, in Dakar, senior public information officers and operational experts from peacekeeping missions in Côte d' Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone, to design a communications strategy on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

29. Most recently, the Department has turned its attention to building a strategy to publicize new peacekeeping activities, particularly in Africa. The aim of the strategy is, among other things, to garner support among key decision makers, in particular with regard to troop contributions and other assistance. This new focus parallels the Department's efforts to promote the new and varied roles of peacekeepers in the context of observances such as International Peacekeepers Day, and to update and expand the peacekeeping web site. In this connection, new web pages provide greater variety and depth of information with greater emphasis on content originating in the field. Expanding access by users is an indication of this strategy's success: there was an increase of 59 per cent in page visits in 2003 than in 2002. The Department has also provided assistance to peacekeeping missions in developing their web sites.

30. The Department has made a concerted effort to publicize United Nations measures on counter-terrorism. United Nations information centres, in particular, have used a wide range of tools to do this. For example, the United Nations Information Service in Vienna organized a workshop on terrorism and the media, providing guidance to journalists in the region on terrorism reporting and their role in shaping opinion. The United Nations Information Service in Bangkok has initiated an educational outreach programme that includes a travelling lecture series targeting high schools and universities throughout the Asia and the Pacific region.

V. Reaching the media: getting the message out

31. One of the principal objectives of the Department is to increase the interest in and access of media organizations and other important intermediaries to the work of the United Nations, by making available timely, objective and balanced information on the activities of the Organization. This effort is led by the News and Media Division, which has continued to expand its daily news output across all media,

using the traditional means as well as the new information communications technologies, to a growing range of key media in all regions of the world.

32. The online United Nations News Centre, which has been available in all the official languages since September 2003, has continued to reach a wider global audience. Visits to the United Nations News Centre web site (English only) rose from 705,945 in December 2002 to over 4.4 million in December 2003. This is well in excess of the target for the end of the biennium 2002-2003 of 1.4 million visits. The daily e-mail service, available in English and French, has also grown significantly. As at December 2003, it has 22,053 subscribers in 130 countries, up from 4,800 in January 2002. The site's growing popularity and the level of satisfaction among its users is also evidenced by the number of external web sites that are creating regular or fixed direct links to the News Centre, such as PolitInfo.com, Dev-Zone.org, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* (both London), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Australian Trade Commission.

33. The growth of United Nations radio and television services has been equally successful. Nearly 140 radio stations in 75 countries, with an estimated audience of over 130 million, broadcast United Nations Radio programmes in seven different languages on a daily or weekly basis. United Nations Radio's broadcast partners now include Belarus Radio Channel One, Radio Beijing, Arab States Broadcasting Union, Voice of America, Radio Vatican, Voice of Nigeria and Deutsche Welle International. In a questionnaire sent to the major syndicators who redisseminate the Department's live feed transmissions via satellite to client stations around the world, all respondents expressed complete satisfaction with the quality of the material provided and its timeliness. As for television services, some 90 television stations in 40 countries, with an estimated audience reach of 1 billion, are now taking United Nations programming. These stations include: CNN, CCTV in China, Doordarshan New Delhi, Radio Television Portuguese, Reseau France Outre Mer, South African Broadcasting, which covers all of Africa, and Orbit Communications, which covers the Middle East. One such product, "The Year in Review" (2003), was aired in 159 countries over 210 stations.

34. An important service to the media is provided by the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General. The Organization's official position on matters in the news is conveyed by that Office through briefings, official statements, interviews and background briefings. The Office provides, via the United Nations web site, transcripts of all the Secretary-General's remarks to the press, issues his official statements and updates his daily appointments and travel records. The Office of the Spokesman also provides the Secretary-General and other officials in the United Nations system with regular daily updates of media coverage of the United Nations and all relevant international issues.

35. The intensification of media interest in the activities of the Organization is exemplified by the activities of the Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit, which had a banner year, recording the highest statistics in each of its activities. In 2003, correspondents accredited to Headquarters totalled 10,391, reaching a peak during the period from January to March, when the Security Council deliberated on the issue of Iraq, and during the general debate of the General Assembly.

36. The Department's efforts to provide better and faster media services have been widely recognized. In a survey on the usefulness of press releases, 11 delegations

(chosen for their geographic diversity) expressed their satisfaction with the service, including its timeliness. Between 68 and 70 per cent of releases are issued within two hours of the end of the meeting covered, which exceeds the target of 65 per cent.

37. Increased timeliness has also been achieved in the area of photos, with the introduction of a full digital system, which enables faster posting of shots onto the Internet. Photos can be made available to clients within minutes of an event. Photo wire agencies have confirmed their satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of United Nations photos.

38. Despite these improvements, the Department faces a number of challenges. A radio survey conducted in 2002, for example, confirmed the relative lack of coverage in many parts of Asia, outside China. This issue will be addressed in the biennium 2004-2005, along with expanding programming on and to Africa. The high costs and intense competitiveness of television also presents enormous challenges. Given its very limited resources with which to meet the objective of expanding its global audience, the Department is actively seeking co-productions with a number of external partners and ways to coordinate resources within the United Nations system. The Department is also investing in new technologies that will permit increased productivity and greatly enhance connectivity to the field.

United Nations web site

39. The increasing utilization of online information products of the Department, especially the United Nations News Centre, mirrors a significant overall growth in visits to the United Nations web site. Hits have grown from 1.6 billion in 2002 to over 2.1 billion in 2003, exceeding the target by over 100 million. On an average day, over 940,000 pages are viewed by users, up from 720,000 page views daily in 2002. In 2003, substantial increases in the visits to the language sites have been recorded: 126 per cent for Arabic, 792 per cent for Chinese, 77 per cent for English, 108 per cent for French, 173 per cent for Russian and 115 per cent for Spanish. The wide range in increased visits reflects much lower base utilization in some languages, the phenomenal growth in overall Internet use in some countries, such as China, as well as the significant measures taken by the Department to make more pages available in the official languages, as part of the drive to attain language parity on the Web. The implementation of the new search engine in all languages is also making it much easier to locate these materials.

40. Live and archived webcasts of United Nations conferences, meetings and events are becoming increasingly popular, with users viewing these webcasts from over 140 countries. For example, in September 2003 alone, over 809,559 users from 144 countries viewed the more than 246 hours of live and archived webcasts presented during the month. During 2004, the Department will further expand its capacity to provide webcasts simultaneously in official languages.

41. For the overall web site, the Department has managed to increase the number of pages available in some languages by use of external pro bono translations provided by academic institutions. It has already signed agreements with the University of Salamanca (Spain) and Shaoxing University (China) and is in the process of concluding one with Minsk State Linguistic University (Belarus).

Discussions are at an advanced stage for similar arrangements for the translation of material into Arabic.

42. The Department is constantly aware of the need to ensure access to content on the web site for all users; special measures are being implemented for users with disabilities. According to the technical guidelines of the Working Group on Internet Matters of the Publications Board, content-providing offices are encouraged to ensure that all new pages developed conform, to the extent possible, to acceptable standards pertaining to access by persons with disabilities. The guidelines further require that text equivalent should be provided for non-text elements. The Department is studying the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium, with a view to incorporating the major recommendations into the next version of the technical guidelines, subject to cost implications.

43. As a step towards the implementation of General Assembly decision 57/579, and in keeping with the proposals presented by the Secretary-General in his report strengthening the Department of Public Information, within the existing capacity, in order to support and enhance the United Nations web site in all official languages of the Organization (A/57/355), one P-4 post and six General Service posts have been redeployed to the Website Section to enhance its language capacity and consolidate its design, programming and presentation. The Section has been realigned and language clusters created to provide additional capacity, as well as to enhance synergies. With these increased resources, the Department will be able to make more news and general information available on the web site in all six official languages. This will include the establishment of an e-mail news service in all official languages to back up the six United Nations news services already in operation. However, it has not yet been possible to identify all of the resources requested in the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General to further the goal of language parity on the United Nations web site. The Department is constantly reviewing the situation, as well as the implementation of decision 57/579, which will be carried out incrementally so as to minimize the impact on other mandated activities. Only when the resources within the Department of Public Information and in other content-generating departments and offices are fully in place will it be possible to designate a future date from which parity can be ensured for new materials on the web site.

44. It is important to point out that providing content in all official languages on the United Nations web site is the responsibility of all content-generating offices of the Secretariat. The Department of Public Information, as manager of the web site, continues to assist other departments in making their content available in all languages. However, thus far, only one other department has made part of its content on the web site available in all the official languages.

VI. Connecting with the public: building partnerships

45. As the "public voice" of the Organization, connecting with the public at large and creating synergies remain vital for the Department. The newly created Outreach Division has been working with additional vigour to take United Nations messages and resources to civil society, in particular, non-governmental organizations, educators, students and private sector partners, in an increasingly integrated fashion, using a variety of both established and innovative channels.

46. Educational outreach, for example, is being enhanced largely through innovative electronic communications. The Global Teaching and Learning Project, created in 1996 to produce educational material for schools, is now participating in an increasing number of online educational partnerships. It has helped to create a new Global School Networks Alliance linking more than 50 national school networks to help teachers and students get more involved in global issues and to offer opportunities for them to collaborate on projects related to the Millennium Development Goals. The project's popular web site, United Nations Cyberschoolbus, continues to engage students around the world. The total number of countries reached each month by the Cyberschoolbus site in 2003 averaged 140, while the total number of pages viewed per month ranged from roughly 500,000 to a little more than 1 million.

47. An integral part of the Department's educational outreach efforts is the quarterly *UN Chronicle*. Now published in the six official languages and available on the United Nations web site, the *UN Chronicle* has been strategically repositioned to give it a dual focus as a journal for academic and educational outreach and for informed debate and exchange of information and ideas among educators, policy makers and thematic experts. Between January and December 2003, the monthly figures for visits to the *UN Chronicle Online* tripled for both the English as well as the French web sites, with over 100,000 page views in December 2003. The thematic biweekly *UN Chronicle* E-Alert is sent to over 1,400 non-governmental organizations and 1,800 individual subscribers, including the permanent missions to the United Nations. The newly developed online United Nations Education Portal, which includes links to educational resources available throughout the United Nations system, now serves as an information hub and resource for teachers and educational institutions.

48. The Department's training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries, now named after Reham Al-Farra, a Department of Public Information staff member killed in the attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad, continues to address the training needs of journalists from developing countries. By providing comprehensive knowledge about the work and activities of the United Nations system, the programme has helped to create long-term interest in the United Nations among those participating. In a recent survey conducted among past participants, 60 per cent of them reported that they had incorporated United Nations-related issues in their professional work within the past 12 months. Two thirds of them noted that the programme was "very helpful" for furthering their careers and all participants said they would recommend it to other journalists. To date, 341 people from 150 countries have participated in the programme.

49. United Nations Publications activities in sales and marketing continues to focus on increasing outreach to a broad spectrum of markets, a main target of which is the academic community. These activities include mailing over 450,000 brochures and catalogues, transmitting 180,000 targeted e-mails, reaching close to 4 million readers of specialized journals through advertisements. Despite a strong recession in key markets, these efforts enabled sales to be maintained at the 2002 level. The Development Business Trust Fund has been successfully integrated into the Section, bringing with it the synergies of combined marketing and sales activities, as well as the management benefits stemming from the agglomeration of similar programmes. At the same time, the overall effectiveness of sales outreach has been enhanced

through closer cooperation, including joint promotional activities, with other areas of the Outreach Division.

50. The Department continues to organize traditional programmes to brief visitors, educators and students. Whether at Headquarters or in the field, activities organized by the Department are often the result of partnerships with civil society, as well as with the United Nations system. For example, the official commemoration of World AIDS Day 2003 was co-sponsored by the Department and UNAIDS with the African Services Committee, the Church World Service and several non-governmental organizations, foundations and private companies. The event was held outside United Nations Headquarters for the first time at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City and was open to the public. Due to easier access, the number of participants nearly quadrupled, compared to the past World AIDS Day observances held at United Nations Headquarters. The Annual Students Conference on Human Rights is now organized as a multi-site videoconference programme, with participants in 2003, from Canada, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and several locations in the United States of America. Through the webcast and discussion boards, students in China, India, Kenya, Romania, Sweden, the Philippines and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland were also able to join. The International Day of Peace is now being observed on 21 September through an expanded videoconference programme, which brings together non-governmental representatives and students from some 40 countries.

51. The Department has also pursued the development and implementation of innovative media partnerships through its UN Works programme. One ground-breaking initiative includes a ten-part original television series for family audiences hosted by United Nations goodwill ambassadors and others. The series, which examines key issues, such as girls' education, HIV/AIDS, poverty, sustainable development, landmines, child soldiers and child labour, through the eyes of children, reaches an estimated audience of between 3.5 and 3.9 million.

52. The Department has stepped up its outreach to non-governmental partners beyond United Nations Headquarters. The Non-Governmental Organization Section of the Outreach Division arranged, for the first time, to have the seven plenary sessions of the fifty-sixth annual Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organization Conference, entitled "Human security and dignity: fulfilling the promise of the United Nations", and held from 8 to 10 September 2003, webcast live over the United Nations web site (www.un.org). In partnership with non-governmental organizations, a special interactive web site was designed that enabled viewers to access the opening and closing sessions and the five plenary panel discussions, to participate via their personal computers in a discussion forum for each session and e-mail questions directly to the moderators of the panels. All of the sessions are archived for further viewing on the United Nations site. Internet visitors from over 25 countries tuned into the Conference via the interactive media platform. This innovative project will be replicated at the fifty-seventh annual Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organization Conference scheduled for 8 to 10 September 2004. The Conference, regarded as the premier event of the non-governmental organization community at United Nations Headquarters each year, now counts on the participation of 2,000 representatives from more than 600 non-governmental organizations in over 80 countries. In 2003, 40 per cent of the non-governmental organization representatives who attended were from 60 developing countries, twice the number from previous years.

53. The restructuring of the Department and, specifically, the creation of the Civil Society Service within the Outreach Division, has yielded a number of positive results, among them, allowing understaffed areas, such as the Exhibits Unit, to benefit from the underlying infrastructure afforded by belonging to a larger entity, the Public Relations Section. The closer relationship that now exists between exhibits and the guided tour operation as a result has also enhanced promotional efforts aimed at attracting visitors to United Nations Headquarters. With regard to the guided tours, despite a drop in attendance early in 2003 owing to heightened security alerts and travel restrictions as a result of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, the operation finished the year with attendance rebounding to the levels of 2000.

VII. Towards knowledge management: responding to growing needs

54. Led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the Department of Public Information continues to deliver a wide range of services to delegations, Secretariat staff, scholars, depository libraries and the general public. In addition, through its active participation in the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, it is assuming a leading role in the coordination of joint activities among the libraries of the Organization.

55. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is also collaborating with the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services, which has primary responsibility for the Official Document System (ODS), and with the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management in enlarging the range of documents available on the system. The Library has been digitizing pre-1993 documents for uploading to ODS since 1999. At present, in view of the imminent opening up of the system to the public at large (scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2004), and as a first initiative with respect to archival collections, the Library is working with its partners to identify and fill gaps in ODS, 1993 to the present. This will ensure that the system becomes a more complete repository of United Nations documentation for the period covered. Furthermore, now that links have been created directly from all relevant bibliographic, speech and voting records in the Library's publicly available online catalogue (UNBISNET) to the full texts of available documents on ODS, access to documentation has been greatly enhanced. The Library also assists other departments in preparing their own materials for posting. For example, in cooperation with the Office of the Panel of Council, the Library has digitized all Administrative Tribunal judgements and uploaded them to the ODS, together with metadata, that is, cataloguing/indexing data, drawn from United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) files.

56. The Library has also been increasing its outreach activities. As at January 2004, there were 408 depository libraries worldwide receiving United Nations documents and publications. In order to improve their effectiveness, a workshop was held in Pretoria from 31 July to 2 August 2003, for 13 depository librarians, from Southern Africa, providing hands-on training in accessing United Nations documentation and web sites. In order to encourage the depositories themselves to engage in outreach, regular e-mail alerts are sent to over 300 libraries able to receive and often to redisseminate such messages. The Library also conducts a regular

training programme to help with individual research needs and to prepare new delegates for dealing with General Assembly documentation. In 2003, it offered 105 such sessions to a total of 678 trainees. The Library has also expanded its outreach to educational institutions. For the second year in a row, library science students from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, United States, have spent their spring break working on various projects within the Library. Specialized training requests (e.g., from teachers from the United Nations Association of Sweden, students from Macalester College (United States) and Kansei Gakuin University (Japan)) are regularly accommodated. The Library also participates in mentoring programmes for young people.

VIII. Conclusions

57. The reorientation and restructuring of the Department of Public Information has helped the Organization to move closer to achieving a key goal of the Secretary-General's reform proposals, namely, enhancing public information. A clearer conception of the Department's role and a more coherent elaboration of its functions has been established. Working strategically, and not just tactically, the Department has been able to emphasize not only the immediate, but also the long-term goals of the Organization. With its activities aligned with its overall priorities, a more effective client consultation mechanism in place, and a system-wide coordination that involves people and organizations at all levels, the Department is now better equipped to achieve its mandate.

58. The efforts of the Department are driven by the stated priority of the Secretary-General to revitalize public confidence in the Organization by "bringing the United Nations closer to the people". By identifying strategic ways to reach out to civil society and recognizing the partnerships and substantive programmes that most clearly articulate the call for multilateral solutions to the complex challenges before the international community, the Department has worked towards achieving the greatest public impact. Furthermore, the new culture of evaluation and accountability now at the centre of its operational activities offers a strong incentive for the staff of the Department to do better what matters most.

59. Like reform, reorientation is a continuing process, not an event. As this process evolves, the Department will continue to evaluate its performance and adapt its work programme to ensure that it contributes to fulfilling the substantive purposes of the Organization and that the story of the United Nations is told effectively and well.

Notes

[1] See the note by the Secretary-General on the review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres (A/57/747).

[2] See General Assembly resolution 55/20.

[3] For an in-depth review of Library activities, see A/AC.198/2004/4.